

Torrance, California
November 17, 1941

MINUTES OF A SPECIAL MEETING
OF THE CITY COUNCIL
OF THE CITY OF TORRANCE

The City Council of the City of Torrance convened in a Special Meeting in the Council Chamber, City Hall, Torrance, California, on Monday evening, November 17, 1941 at 7:45 P.M.

Mayor McGuire called the meeting to order.

The following Councilmen were present: Babcock, Kail, Powell and McGuire.

Mayor McGuire read the call of the meeting, being "for the purpose of adopting an emergency ordinance pertaining to reconstruction of buildings and for the purpose of conducting any other business which might properly come before the Board." The consent to Special Meeting form was signed by Councilmen Powell, Babcock, Kail and McGuire.

Clerk Bartlett presented and read in full:

ORDINANCE NO. 331

AN ORDINANCE OF THE CITY COUNCIL OF THE
CITY OF TORRANCE PROVIDING MINIMUM
REQUIREMENTS FOR THE RECONSTRUCTION OF
BUILDINGS DAMAGED BY EARTHQUAKE.

Councilman Hitchcock arrived at 7:38 P.M. during reading of the ordinance and signed Consent to Special Meeting form.

Mayor McGuire invited suggestions and comments from persons present in the Council Chamber, at which time a lengthy discourse ensued relative to various specifications embodied in the ordinance. Property owners of buildings damaged by the earthquake, Structural Engineers, Architects and the City Engineer participated in the discussion. Engineer Jain asked the various Structural Engineers and Architects to advance any ideas which had been applied successfully in similar earthquake or emergency occurrences, advising that Ordinance No. 331 will be changed to comply with practices which have been found to be most satisfactory, based on the experience of those who have applied the various methods and principles.

Present in the Council Chamber were the following Structural Engineers and Architects:

William C. Coffey	George Fosdyke
W. M. Bostack	H. Sage Webster
Frank H. Cannon	J. H. Pine
C. E. Norrenberg	William Mellema
Ben Wiseman	H. H. West

Mr. William Mellema, Architect and Structural Engineer, introduced Mr. Frank H. Cannon, Structural Engineer for the City of Brawley, who discussed the masonry provisions of the ordinance.

He suggested that use of one material presents the most economical method to be used in reconstruction work, pointing out that the ordinance in its present form would require three courses at the top of a single, one story brick building, a very expensive process, he said. He stated that a good many of the items contained in the ordinance are already covered in the Uniform Building Code. Engineer Jain said an endeavor had been made to arrange the various requirements in one ordinance for convenience. Mr. Cannon said that, in its present form, the ordinance supersedes the Uniform Building Code, which might, he added, work a hardship in regard to the fire walls.

Mr. Mellema pointed out that, inasmuch as it will be required that the work be designed by either a licensed structural engineer or a licensed architect, so far as details of the Code requirements are concerned, that part is unimportant, as the architect will have all those things incorporated in the drawings and, so far as the contractors are concerned, all they need do is follow the drawings.

Regarding the payment of a \$12.00 per annum license fee by masonry contractors, Mr. Sam Levy, retail merchant, voiced an objection, claiming that, inasmuch as there are no licensed masonry contractors in the City, the owners of damaged buildings will be the persons who must, in the final analysis, bear the cost of the license. Engineer Jain pointed out that the reason there are no licensed masonry contractors is that the masonry is always done on the general contractors license at the time a building is originally constructed, there being little masonry work to be done on the other than on new jobs, under ordinary circumstances.

The question arose as to whether it is intended that the structural engineer or architect responsible for the design should examine the building, work out a general method of reconstruction, discuss the matter with the City Engineer and then prepare the plans, or whether the structural engineer or architect should prepare the plans first and bring them to the City Engineer for his approval. Engineer Jain advised that it may save time for the method to be worked out and then discussed with the Engineering Department if there is to be any major changes. He said structural engineers will assist in the checking of plans as they are presented, as every building will represent an individual problem.

Mr. H. H. West opened the discussion of fire walls at this time, the discussion following along the lines of the percent of gravity for fire walls as required by the Uniform Building Code, type of materials to be used, height of the walls and other technicalities involved in the construction of said fire walls.

During discussion of the various items, Engineer Jain made changes on the ordinance as suggested and agreed upon, reference being made repeatedly to the Uniform Building Code. The consensus of opinion seemed to be that the items mentioned in the ordinance which are already contained in the Code could just as well be deleted from the ordinance. Also, it was agreed that various requirements should be left to the discretion of the City Engineer and Building Inspector.

One of the Structural Engineers pointed out that, although the ordinance follows very closely the ordinance adopted by the City of Long Beach after the earthquake of 1933, very little was known at that time about earthquake resistance and that there has been nine or ten years experience since then to benefit by.

Regarding fire walls, Mr. Sam Levy declared them to be of little or no value in saving fires. He contended they should be built less than three feet, especially on the front of the building. Mr. Jack Isen, merchant, and owner of the Gramercy Apartments, reported that the Gramercy Apartments had withstood the earthquake remarkably well with practically no damage at all, which he attributed largely to the three foot fire walls of reinforced concrete constructed when the building was remodeled in 1936.

Mr. Ben Wiseman advised that fire walls are essential to facilitate drainage, but agreed that height of the fire walls should be made to conform with the requirements of the drainage of the roofs. He said they have a very definite and good purpose as to fire protection and drainage and from an architectural standpoint.

Mr. W. M. Bostack pointed out that the Uniform Building Code does not require fire walls for buildings under twenty feet, said that a number of buildings damaged in the earthquake will come in that class. In the question of fire walls, he said, it is not an engineering matter but a matter for the Board of Fire Underwriters to determine. He also suggested that the Uniform Building Code be followed as to requirements for fire walls.

Upon being questioned regarding height of fire walls, Fire Chief McMaster said ~~he~~ thought two foot fire walls would be sufficient, which would, he said, meet requirements of the State Fire Marshall.

After considerable discussion along these lines, during which time Postmaster Earl Connor, Lou Deininger, Mrs. Sylvia Fink, Gaston Arcq and several others, together with the members of the Council, the City Engineer and the Structural Engineers and Architects participated, Mr. Bostack suggested that the various Structural Engineers meet for a round table discussion November 18, 1941 for the purpose of analyzing each section of the ordinance and arriving at certain conclusions regarding same. Several property owners urged that the meeting be held sooner than the date mentioned, suggesting that the Council meeting recess for that purpose in order that passage of the ordinance could be completed at this meeting. It was pointed out that it is imperative to have the buildings reconstructed at the earliest possible date, especially before the rainy season begins. Attorney McCall suggested that the Structural Engineers and Architects, the City Engineer, and City Attorney retire to the office of the City Attorney for the purpose as outlined by Mr. Bostack.

